Sugiru 17 no Haru

Volume 2 Chapter 14

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過ぎる十七の春 2

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「過ぎる十七の春」講談社刊

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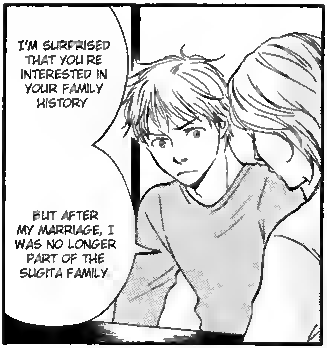
第8話

Seventeen years old
What can this mean?
It must mean something!
9th generation
Eldest son Kichi
Born April 1801
Died 8 May 1818
Second son Nagachika
Born December 1814
Died 16 January 1832
Mother Died 16 January 1832

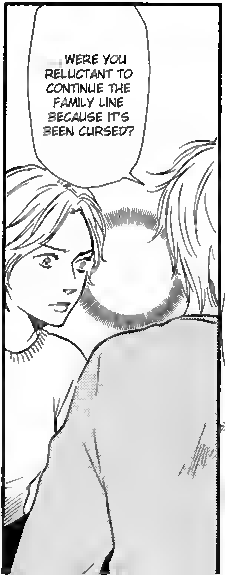
I NEED TO ASK YOU ABOUT SOMETHING
MUM,
about
I JUST WANT YOUR HELP TO COUNT THIS MONEY.
YOU WON'T EVEN HELP WITH SUCH A SMALL MATTER?
And so many took their mothers with them
The problematic 9th generation as de all eldest sons after that died when they were seventeen.
MUM...
Just to be really sure I converted all the date's starting from the first generation using the Gregorian calendar
AH NAOKI YOU'RE HERE,
COME AND HELP ME WITH THIS

Just how did Uncle Munekazu die? In a fire? But even then
FIRST, TELL ME THE AMOUNT. THEN TELL ME WHO GAVE IT
I'LL WRITE IT DOWN
MUM,
I WANT TO KNOW

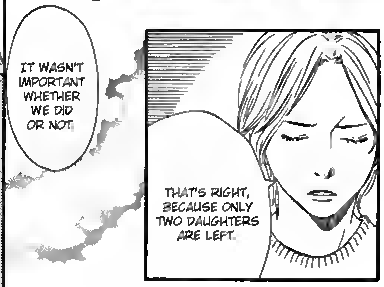
There's no address even
EH? THIS ONE... WHO GAVE THIS?
HOW DID UNCLE MUNEKAZU DIE?
YES
LET'S CONTINUE WITH THE COUNTING
WHY DO YOU ASK?
I WANT TO KNOW
WAS IT REALLY BECAUSE OF THAT FIRE?
御香
IT'S NOT IMPORTANT, YOU DON'T HAVE TO KNOW
WHY ARE YOU SUDDENLY INTERESTED IN THIS ...?
...Something's fishy
GRANDPA AND GRANDMA DIED IN THAT FIRE TOO?


I'M SURPRISED THAT YOU'RE INTERESTED IN YOUR FAMILY HISTORY
BUT AFTER MY MARRIAGE, I WAS NO LONGER PART OF THE SUGITA FAMILY

HOW CAN IT NOT BE IMPORTANT?
THEY'RE MY RELATIVES


WERE YOU RELUCTANT TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY LINE BECAUSE IT'S BEEN CURSED?

BUT THE SUGATA FAMILY HAS NO HEIR, RIGHT?
NEITHER OF YOU WANTED TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY LINE?


IT WASN'T IMPORTANT WHETHER WE DID OR NOT.
THAT'S RIGHT, BECAUSE ONLY TWO DAUGHTERS ARE LEFT.

NOTHING.
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
JUST THAT YOU HAVE THIS EXPRESSION OF LOATHING WHENEVER MY BIRTHDAY IS MENTIONED.
I DO NOT
YOU DO, SO DID AUNT MIKIKO
THAT'S WHY I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON
SHE DID?
YEAH, SHE DID
TAKASHI AND I— US TURNING SEVENTEEN SEEMS TO FRIGHTEN YOU BOTH WHY IS THAT?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT
fidget
Why is Mum so cagey about this?
fidget
UNCLE MUNEKAZU DIED WHEN HE WAS SEVENTEEN, DIDN'T HE?
SO DID THE ELDEST SON OF THE PREVIOUS GENERATION

AND THE ONE BEFORE THAT.
AND ANOTHER BEFORE THAT.
ALL OF THEM DIED WHEN THEY WERE SEV-ENTEEN.

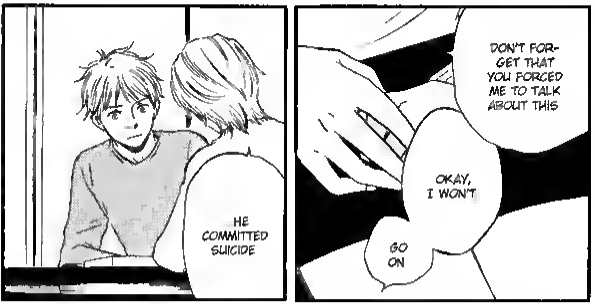
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DRIVING AT
FORGET IT, YOU CAN GO
IT'S OBVIOUS YOU DON'T WANT TO HELP ME WITH THIS
glare
WELL, I DON'T REALLY CARE IF YOU WON'T TELL
I'LL JUST GO TO THE LIBRARY AND FIND OUT FROM THE RECORDS THERE
GO ON THEN
THERE ISN'T
JUST WHAT ARE YOU HIDING?
IS THERE SOME REASON YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME?

GO AND INVESTIGATE ALL YOU LIKE
I'M NOT STUPID I'LL FIND OUT FIRST WHAT YOUR REGISTERED BIRTHPLACE IS FROM THE DISTRICT OFFICE
I TOLD YOU I DON'T CARE IF YOU DO
DON'T TREAT ME LIKE A KID, AND UNDERESTIMATE ME I REALLY WILL INVESTIGATE THIS!
THIS WAY I'LL KNOW WHERE YOU WERE BORN, AND THEN I'LL GO TO THE LIBRARY THERE TO INVESTIGATE
OR I'LL ASK THE RESIDENTS THERE...
NAOKI!
...MUM,
YOU KNOW DON'T YOU?

ALL ELDEST SONS OF THE SUGITA FAMILY DIED WHEN THEY WERE SEVENTEEN...
TAKING THEIR MOTHERS WITH THEM.
I'M THE ELDEST SON OF THE SUGATA FAMILY TOO,
AND I'M ALREADY SEVENTEEN
WHO SAYS YOU'RE THEIR SON
I CAN BE CONSIDERED AS SUCH AFTER ALL, THERE S NO OTHER HEIR
WOULDN'T THAT MEAN THE DAUGHTERS ARE THE NEXT TARGET OF THIS VENDETTA?

sigh
!
I know it's really cruel to press Mum like this,
but I have to know more about this crucial point.
Mum doesn't know about Takashi.
Or about those strange happenings in this house.

I WON'T TALK ABOUT THIS EVER AGAIN
I'LL LISTEN CAREFULLY
JUST HOW DID UNCLE DIE?
MM.
SIGH


HE COMMITTED SUICIDE
DON'T FORGET THAT YOU FORCED ME TO TALK ABOUT THIS
OKAY, I WON'T
GO ON

HE SET HIMSELF ON FIRE?
SUICIDE? SUICIDE LED TO THAT FIRE?

AND GRANDPA AND GRANDMA?
...YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW?
YES, PLEASE TELL ME
YOUR UNCLE MURDERED THE...

—What did Mum just say?
—Huh?
Murdered?
Uncle murdered his own parents?
Ugh.
Ugh.
Ugh.

YOU MUST KNOW? HE WAS YOUR UNCLE
WHAT ABOUT YOUR UNCLE HIROMASA, THE ELDEST SON?
DID HE MURDER HIS OWN PARENTS TOO?
CAN YOU ANSWER ANOTHER QUESTION?
YOU JUST NEED TO NOD OR SHAKE YOUR HEAD
Ugh
Ugh
nod

SORRY...

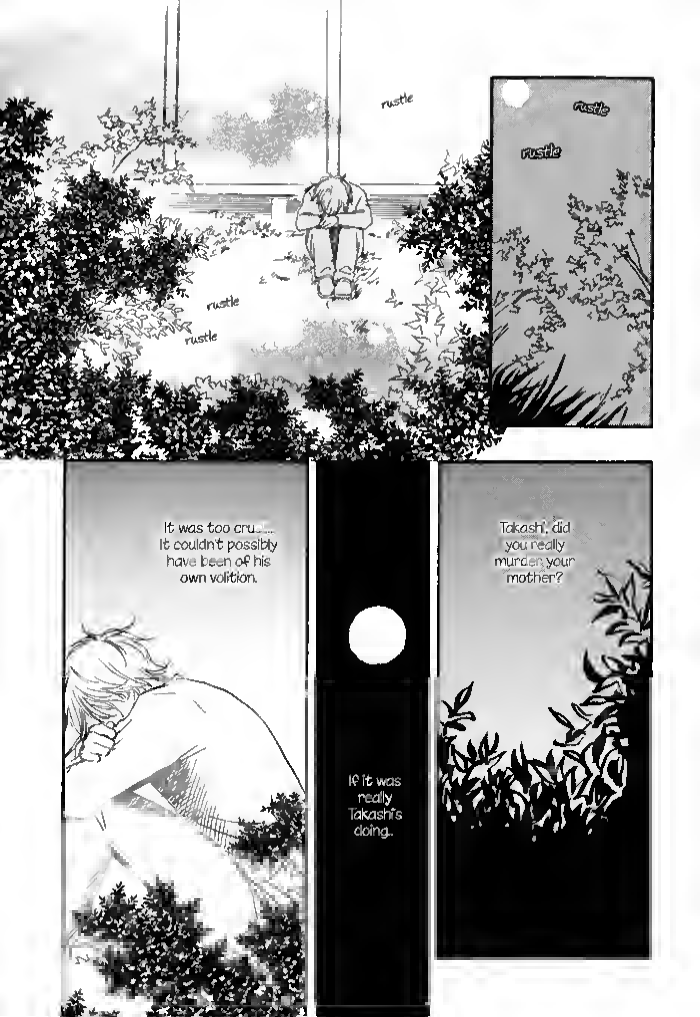
THE ELDEST SONS OF THE SUGATA FAMILY WILL MURDER THEIR OWN MOTHERS UPON TURNING SEVENTEEN
Is this isn't a curse, then what is?
shock
That explains a lot.
If Aunty, being the eldest daughter, continued the family line then Takashi is considered the eldest son of the Sugata family

Wasn't it Takashi who killed her?
Was that what Mum wanted to ask then?
That disjointed conversation with Mum when I called her from the hospital..
The gloomy expressions of Mum and Aunty
YOU'RE SURE IT WAS SUICIDE?
Takashi's transformation... there can only be one reason
The curse that destroyed the Sugata family has returned.
And it's manifesting in the fifteenth generation in Aunty and Takashi, the eldest son
Aunty must have sensed this would happen That Takashi would kill her someday..
So she

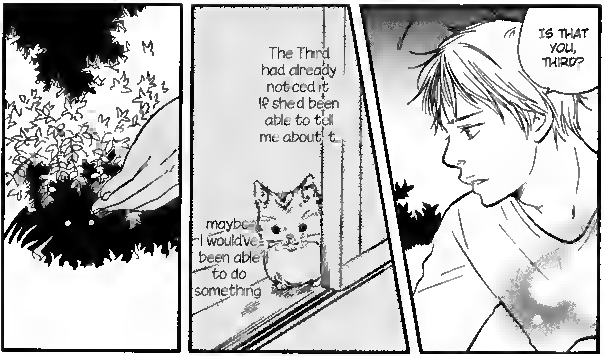
Aunty..
Even if the second attempt was suicide, what about the first time?
!Did she really commit suicide?
Surely not...
Grab
Did he murder Aunty?
Did Takashi do it?
UGH ...
COUGH COUGH
SPLASH

ひさしぶり

Ahemp
SHOCK
!!
DAMN IT...
Sigh...


rustle
rustle
rustle
rustle
rustle
rustle
It was too cru..... It couldn't possibly have been of his own volition.
If it was really Takashi's doing...
Takashi, did you really murder your mother?

rustle
rustle
rustle
If Kashi was forced to do it just because he's a descendant of the Suoh family, then I...
THIRD...?
!


M
The Third had already noticed it. If she'd been able to tell me about it...
maybe I would've been able to do something
IS THAT YOU, THIRD?

It's huge
rustle
Wa t
That's not the Third.
M
rustle
rustle

It's coming.
My body...
meow
I can't move!

I need to escape
Escape...
BAM
!!
MREOW
MREOW

Thlnd!
Hiss!
MREOW!
slash
rustle
rustle
rustle
SWIPE
SWIPE

rustle
rustle
Purr
Purr

Even if she won't go near the house, the Third still keeps to the courtyard.
.....
THANK YOU...
Purr
Purr
She's been shut out of the house, but she still watches over Takashi and the house like some guardian angel...

第9話

BROTHER, ARE YOU UP?
HAVE YOU SEEN THIRD?
drowsy
I LET HER OUT
SHE KEPT SCRATCHING AT THE DOOR, AND WHEN I OPENED IT, SHE RAN OUT
HOW DID YOU BRING HER IN?
—LAST NIGHT, WHEN WE HAD COMPANY
After that, I carried Third back to the room where I fell into a dazed sort of sleep

LIAR
COULDN'T BE BETTER
BROTHER, ARE YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK HALF-DEAD
HONESTLY, DO GET UP NOW IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR LUNCH
!?
IT'S SO LATE ALREADY
NORIKO, ABOUT...
SINCE YOU'RE UP, COME AND HAVE LUNCH
OKAY
I SEE
Takashi...
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE IN HIS ROOM.
WHERE'S TAKASHI?
third Slide

Takashi...
Takashi did you really do it?
What was that thing last night?
Is that thing manipulating Takashi?

Mum cried so bitterly because I asked about Uncle Munekazu's death
sigh
Your uncle murdered them
I know it was really cruel of me
But I had to ask her about it

rush
clink
clink
clink
clink
clink
Mum wouldn't look at me during lunch
I dread when I ask about him
I'm really sorry Mum
ABOUT UNCLE MUNE-KAZU
MUM...
rush
shock

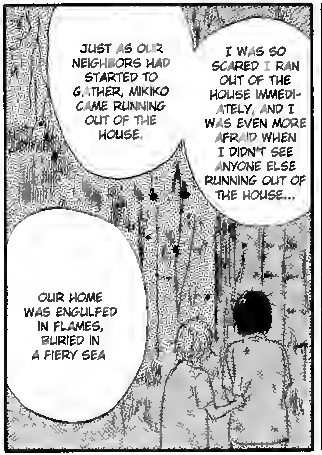
=I know it's really hard on her when I ask about this.
DO YOU KNOW WHY HE DID IT?
WHAT UNCLE DID...
nod
DID HIS BEHAVIOR CHANGE SUDDENLY?
WAS IT BEFORE HIS BIRTHDAY?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
YOU'VE BEEN ASKING ABOUT THIS SINCE YESTERDAY

TAKA-
SHI
HAS BEEN ACTING STRANGE RECENTLY.
STRANGE HOW...?
JUST WHAT I SAID.
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN, DON'T YOU?

If Mum witnessed Uncle Munekazu's sudden change of attitude before...
IT'S AS IF HE'S BECOME SOMEONE ELSE...
AND SUDDENLY TURNED COLD AND DISTANT?
COLD, ARROGANT, CRUEL... YOU COULD SAY ALL THAT...
IN A NUTSHELL, HE'S BECOME ANOTHER PERSON ALTOGETHER
I THOUGHT IT'S BECAUSE OF THE WAY MIKIKO DIED... THAT'S WHY TAKASHI'S CHANGED
...NO,
THAT'S WHAT I HOPED.

MUM,
AFTER UNCLE CHANGED HOW MUCH OF HIS OLD SELF REMAINED?
506
IF THAT'S NOT THE REASON
THAT MEANS HISTORY IS REPEATING ITSELF...
UGH...
click
I don't know how to explain it.
But if Takashi's change hasn't affected his true nature
then I can't believe he'd do not murdered Aunty.
?
UM, I MEAN...

AFTER THAT, WE HAD DINNER THEN WE EVEN TOOK A FAMILY PICTURE AT A STUDIO
...NOTHING UNUSUAL HAPPENED THAT DAY
plunk
BROTHER'S METAMORPHOSIS...
HAPPENED BEFORE HIS BIRTHDAY
ON HIS BIRTHDAY WE ALL WENT TO WATCH A MOVIE TOGETHER
That's right, it was just out of the blue...
Takashi also transformed into somebody else overnight...
HM
THE NEXT DAY, BROTHER WAS DIFFERENT...
HE WAS AN ORDINARY TEENAGER, AND ALTHOUGH HE WASN'T AS CLEVER AS TAKASHI
IT WAS CLEAR THAT SOMETHING STRANGE HAD HAPPENED TO HIM
BEFORE THAT DID HE EVER MENTION SENSING ANYTHING UNUSUAL OR SEEING ANYTHING STRANGE?
NO... TAKASHI MENTIONED THAT HE DID?

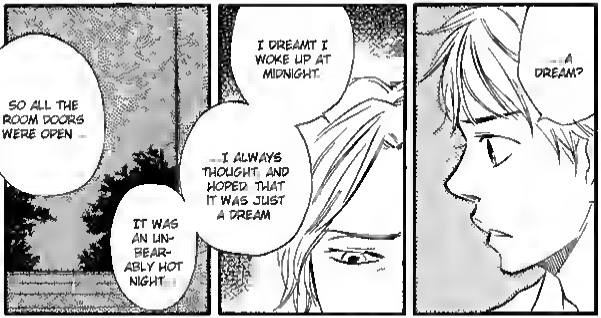

JUST AS OUR NEIGHBORS HAD STARTED TO GATHER, MIKIKO CAME RUNNING OUT OF THE HOUSE.
I WAS SO SCARED I RAN OUT OF THE HOUSE IMMEDIATELY, AND I WAS EVEN MORE AFRAID WHEN I DIDN'T SEE ANYONE ELSE RUNNING OUT OF THE HOUSE...
OUR HOME WAS ENGULFED IN FLAMES, BURIED IN A FIERY SEA

Uncle's tragedy happened three days after his birthday

The family never saw it coming.

MIKIKO WAS HOLDING A BOX OF "IMPORTANT PAPERS"
WE HELD EACH OTHER TIGHTLY AND WATCHED OUR HOME GO UP IN FLAMES
AND ALL THIS TIME BROTHER AND OUR PARENTS NEVER CAME OUT
LATER, THEY FOUND THREE BODIES IN THE ASHES
MUM AND DAD'S BODIES WERE TIED TO A BEAM IN THE LAST ROOM.
MY BROTHER
THERE WAS A VERY SERIOUS WOUND ON HIS CHEST.
THE POLICE SAID HE APPEARED TO HAVE SET FIRE TO THE HOUSE AFTER MURDERING OUR PARENTS AND THEN COMMITTED SUICIDE BY STABBING HIMSELF.

grip
I THINK MIKIKO SAW ALL THREE BODIES
BECAUSE THE BOX WAS KEPT IN THAT ROOM.
I NEVER ASKED HER ABOUT WHAT SHE SAW
EVEN WHEN IT WAS TOO LATE
WE NEVER TALKED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY
It was like a locked trunk.
And to prevent a monster from escaping, we deliberately forgot about it, praying that it would not come after us.
But it was all for nothing
MIKIKO NEVER SAID ANYTHING
SO I DIDN'T EITHER
ACTUALLY, I HAD A DREAM THAT DAY


SO ALL THE ROOM DOORS WERE OPEN...
IT WAS AN UNBEARABLY HOT NIGHT...
I DREAMT I WOKE UP AT MIDNIGHT.
...I ALWAYS THOUGHT AND HOPED THAT IT WAS JUST A DREAM
...A DREAM?

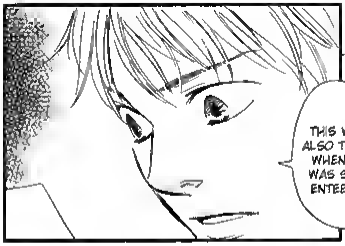
I SAW SOMETHING TERRIFYING PASS BY IN THE CORRIDOR.
SOMETHING TERRIFYING?
FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT IT WAS MY BROTHER
BUT THEN I REALIZED I WAS WRONG
AND THEN?
I WAS SLEEPING UNDER THE MOSQUITO NET BUT THEN I WOKE UP ABRUPTLY
I DON'T KNOW WHY...
I SUPPOSE IT WAS TOO HOT...
WHATEVER IT WAS I WOKE UP...

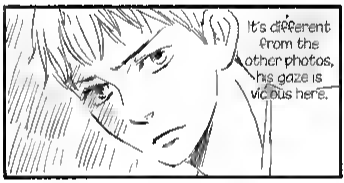
BECAUSE THAT PERSON WAS HOLDING A KNIFE...
HE WALKED FROM THE KITCHEN TO THE ROOM... AND HE HAD MORE THAN ONE KNIFE
I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY EXACTLY BUT HE HAD A FEW KNIVES IN BOTH HANDS
AND HE HAD A LENGTH OF ROPE AROUND HIS NECK
ROPE...?
JUST ORDINARY ROPE COILED ROUND HIS NECK...

I WAS SO SCARED
AND YET, I WAS SLEEPY
I KNOW I WAS ONLY HALF-AWAKE AT THE TIME
SO I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS A DREAM, AND I DECIDED TO TREAT IT AS SUCH TOO...

Takashi wasn't like that. He didn't kill Mikiko, right?
NAOKI,
TAKASHI WASN'T LIKE THAT, RIGHT?
HE DIDN'T.

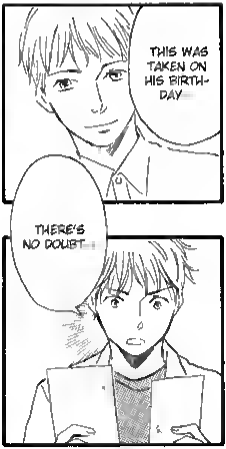
IF WE ARRANGE THESE CHRONO-LOGICALLY
Uncle Munekazu who died at seventeen.
And this family photo in which everyone's smiling stiffly, was taken on Uncle's birthday
Uncle died three days after this photo was taken
This was a photo of Mum when she was thirteen.


THIS WAS ALSO TAKEN WHEN HE WAS SEVENTEEN


It's different from the other photos, his gaze is vicious here.

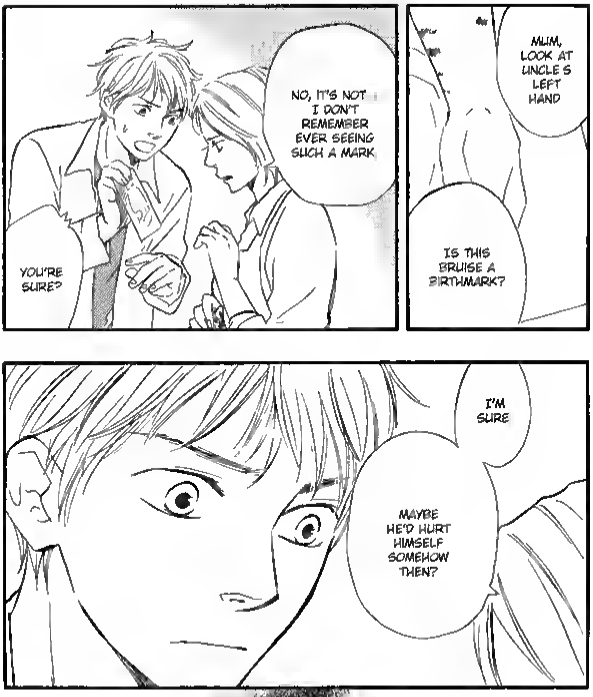
Just like
Takashi after his metamorphosis

The next day, Brother was different
He has a completely different aura


THIS WAS TAKEN ON HIS BIRTHDAY
THERE'S NO DOUBT

THIS BRUISE
I've seen that somewhere
!?
I'VE ALWAYS HAD THIS
...On Takashi.
Takashihas the same bruise on his hand.

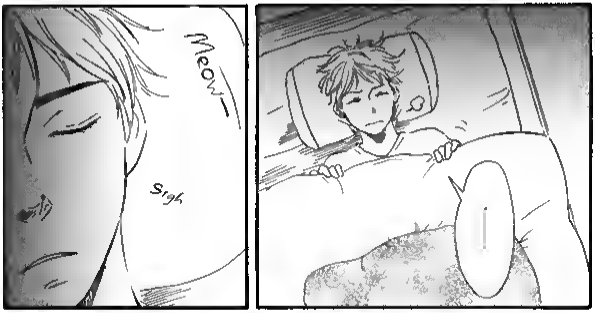
MUM!
tap
tap
tap
tap
WHAT'S HAPPENED?
LOOK AT THIS!
WHERE DID YOU GET IT ?
I FOUND IT IN AUNTY'S ROOM! LOOK AT THIS HERE
THIS WAS TAKEN AFTER HIS BIRTHDAY, RIGHT?
YES
THIS WAS PROBABLY TAKEN ONE OR TWO DAYS BEFORE THAT INCIDENT
THIS WAS TAKEN WITH MY COUSIN'S CAMERA, WHEN YOUR GRANDAUNT CAME WITH A PRESENT FOR BROTHER

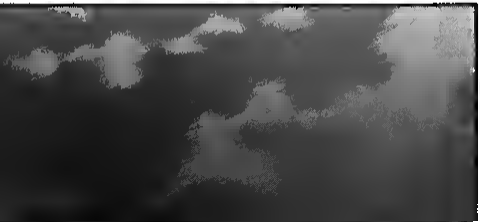

NO, IT'S NOT
I DON'T
REMEMBER
EVER SEEING
SUCH A MARK
YOU'RE
SURE?
MUM,
LOOK AT
UNCLE S
LEFT
HAND
IS THIS
BRUISE A
BIRTHMARK?
I'M
SURE
MAYBE
HE'D HURT
HIMSELF
SOMEHOW
THEN?
This bruise
s a very
important
clue
It must have
something to
do with the curse
on all the eldest
sons of the
Sata family

rustle
rustle
rustle

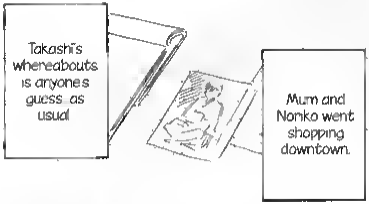
fwu
rustle
rustle
WHY AM I SUDDENLY AWAKE?
WHAT THE HELL...?
Meow...
!?

rattle
THIRD?
drowsy
THIRD?


Meow
Sigh



22nd April
Today's Takashi's birthday
RUSH


Takashi's whereabouts is anyone's guess as usual
Mum and Nonko went shopping downtown.

SIGH
NO,
I STILL DON'T GET IT
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR

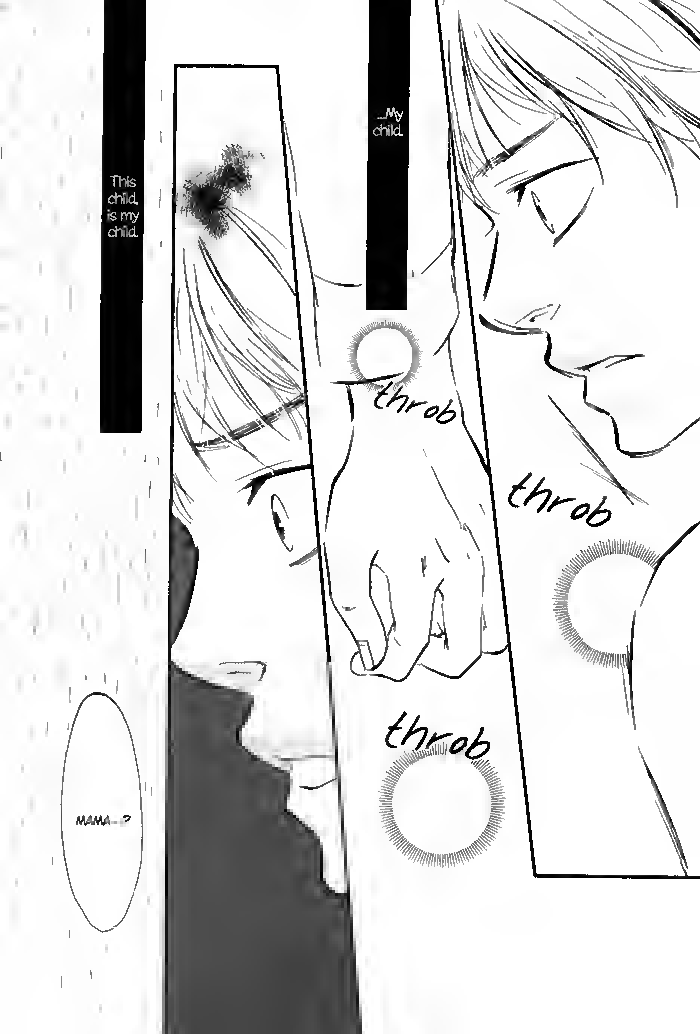
I only know what I want
I want to erase my fears and doubts about Takashi, and I want him to go back to normal

I can't do anything about Takashi
But, what should I do?
And I can't find a way out of this impasse.

HAA...
flop
Takashi, what really happened? Did you really kill your own mother?
EXCUSE ME.

WHO COULD THAT BE AT THIS TIME
shock
YOU ARE?
Why do I feel so nostalgic
WELL
I seem to have met this woman before
Is she a mourner here to pay her respects? Oh yes, tomorrow is the seventh day

PLEASE COME IN FIRST YOU'LL GET WET STANDING OUT HERE
BUT... I'M ALONE AT HOME NOW,
I'LL GET YOU A TOWEL FIRST SO YOU CAN DRY YOURSELF
YOU'VE... GROWN UP ALREADY
...YOU WERE JUST A CHILD THEN
YOU DON'T REMEMBER, DO YOU?
AFTER ALL, YOU WERE ONLY THREE WHEN THE SUGATA FAMILY TOOK YOU AWAY
...What on earth is she talking about?
THAT
Bliss
http://bliss.fanfood.jp.net


...My child.
This child, is my child.
throb
throb
throb
MAMA...?

grab
Mama

第10話

ｻｰｻｰ

A rainy day. That's right. It was raining very heavily that day...

MAMA!

PLEASE DON'T DO THIS!
I'M BEGGING YOU!
CRASH
CRASH
THIS CHILD IS ALL I HAVE.
THAT'S MY CHILD MINE.
PLEASE DON'T DO THIS!
russh
YOU'RE...

YOU'RE A WOMAN TOO, YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND!
THIS CHILD IS ALL I HAVE
PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM AWAY!

HE HASN'T ANY SUGATA BLOOD AT ALL SO PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM AWAY
IF YOU WANT US TO DISAPPEAR, I PROMISE WE'LL NEVER SHOW UP IN FRONT OF YOU AGAIN ONLY PLEASE DON'T TAKE HIM FROM ME!
EVEN THOUGH HALF HIS BLOOD IS WORTHLESS, THE OTHER HALF IS STILL THE SUGATA FAMILY'S BLOOD.
NO!
THIS CHILD IS MINE ALONE!
WHAT BELONGS TO THE SUGATA FAMILY SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THEM.

YOU CLAIM HALF OF HIM BELONGS TO THE SUGATA FAMILY, SO TEAR HIM IN HALF
AND TAKE THAT HALF!
THEN TEAR HIM IN HALF!
I'M JUST TAKING BACK WHAT BELONGS TO THE SUGATA FAMILY.
IS THIS THE EXTENT OF MOTHERLY LOVE?
YOU'RE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR LOSS THAN ABOUT HIS LIFE!
...WHAT?

IF YOU WANT TO TEAR YOUR CHILD IN HALF, DO IT YOURSELF.
LET'S SEE YOU DO IT.
I—
.....

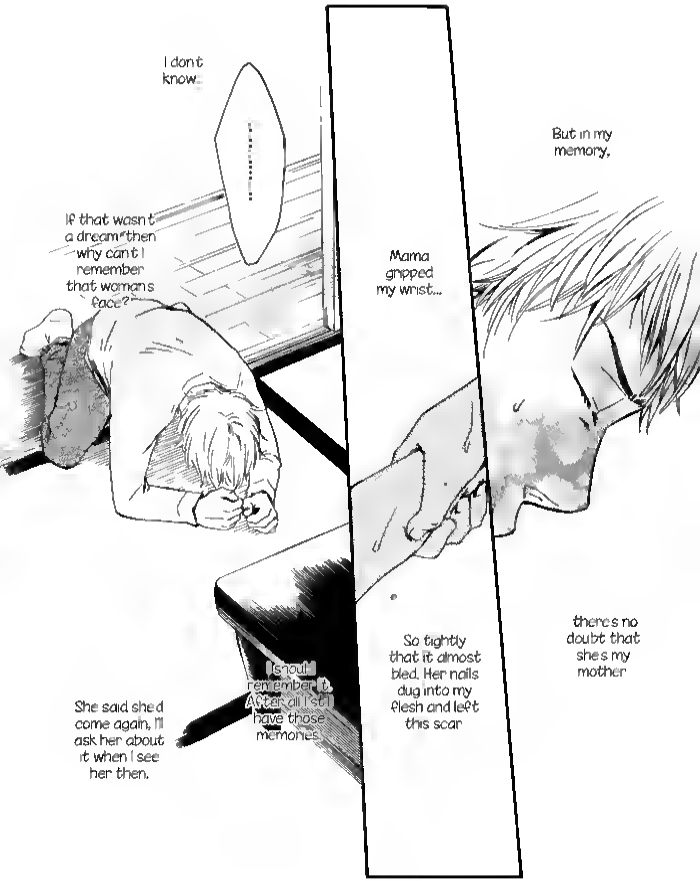
Ma...
Mama...
Mama...!
Ma. Mama!

gasp
!
MAMA
.....
—CAN I,
COME AND SEE YOU AGAIN?
I smile

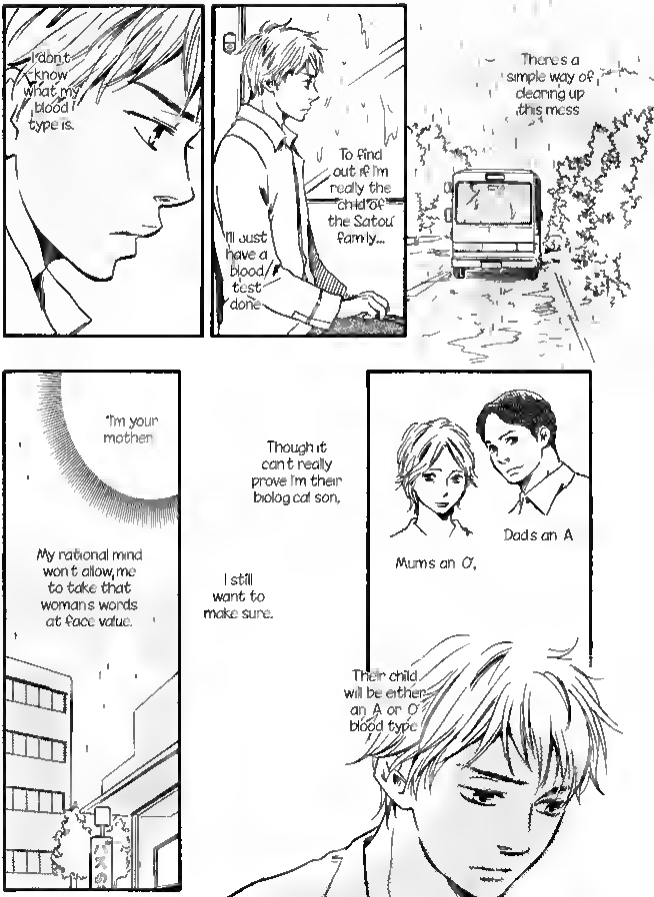
RUSSHH
nod
"I'm your mother."

If it's true
then I'm not Mum's son.
HOW CAN IT BE..?
No, it can't be true!
But
What was that memory I just relived?
It was definitely an old memory one that I'd forgotten.
HOW COULD THAT BE..?
If what that woman says is true then I was taken by this family to be their foster son when I was three

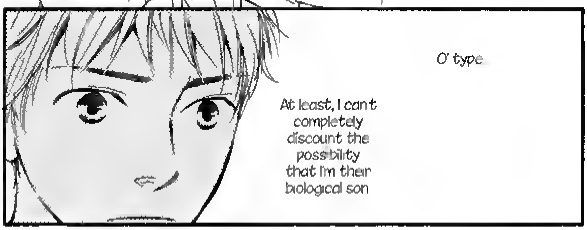
Maybe that woman was spouting nonsense
Nowhere on the birth certificate does it say I'm adopted.
I was the one who got all the documents ready for entry into high school
What was she wearing? Her voice?
I can't remember anything now...
Strange...?
I can't remember what she looks like. What'd she do for a living?
Something doesn't seem right about this.
Have I always had this scar on my hand?
Was I dreaming?
Pain


I don't know.
If that wasn't a dream, then why can't I remember that woman's face?
She said she'd come again, I'll ask her about it when I see her then.
I should remember it. After all, I still have those memories.
Mama gripped my wrist...
So tightly that it almost bled. Her nails dug into my flesh and left this scar
But in my memory,
there's no doubt that she's my mother

creak
My brain feels like it's stuffed with cotton wool
and can't figure out anything.
If I'm a foster son, why doesn't it say I'm adopted on my birth certificate?
DAMN IT
RUSSHHH
Bliss
Hiiragi Aoi and Nagaoka

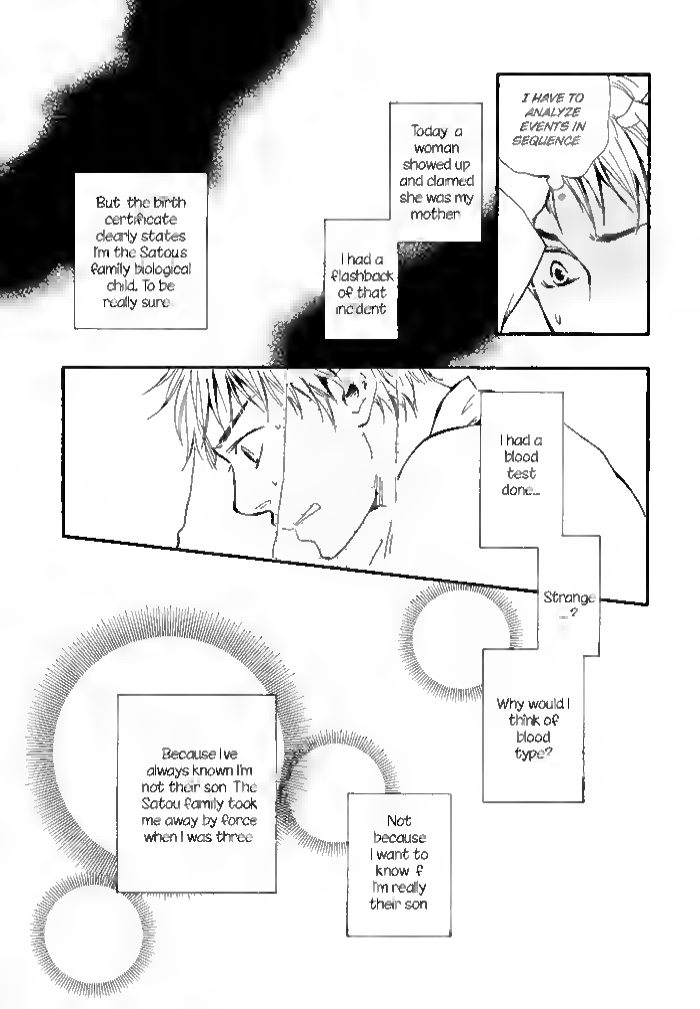

I don't know what my blood type is.
I'll just have a blood test done
To find out if I'm really the child of the Satou family...
There's a simple way of clearing up this mess
"I'm your mother."
My rational mind won't allow me to take that woman's words at face value.
Though it can't really prove I'm their biological son,
I still want to make sure.
Dad's an A
Mum's an O.
Their child will be either an A or O blood type.

SATOU-SAN,
YOUR BLOOD TYPE IS 'O'


O' type
At least, I can't completely discount the possibility that I'm their biological son

Back to square one.

What's really the truth?...
Where have I seen this scar before?
Of course I've seen it...
Heh...
Because, since I was a child...
...Something isn't right
Why do I feel like I've just strayed down a path I shouldn't have?
...Strange?


I HAVE TO ANALYZE EVENTS IN SEQUENCE
Today a woman showed up and claimed she was my mother
I had a flashback of that incident
But the birth certificate clearly states I'm the Satous family biological child. To be really sure
I had a blood test done...
Strange...?
Why would I think of blood type?
Because I've always known I'm not their son. The Satou family took me away by force when I was three
Not because I want to know if I'm really their son

No that doesn't matter One things for sure, Mum's a member of the Sugata family
Wrong
The woman who took me away had nothing to do with the Satou family
HUH?
But, what's this strong feeling of uneasiness?
I feel like my reasoning is skewed somehow
All I know is I felt a blood test was necessary
And the result is that my blood type's O

Last autumn, Grandma had an operation.
I learned about their blood types because of the blood transfusion.
Grandma and Grandpa are both 'AB'
Dad's an A. Mum's an O...
Mum's an 'OO'...
AA + OO can only result in...
AB' + AB' can only result in AA, AB or BB blood types
Dad's an A type so that's AA
IT CAN ONLY BE 'AO'...

slide
slink
O is impossible in this equation
What am I supposed to think now?
Dad's not Grandma's biological son?
My dad's not Satou Hiroyuki?
Or, I'm not Mum's, Yuki's biological son?
I'm the odd one out in that family
Nonkos definitely an A type

The scar on my wrist the memory that resurfaced...
The things my real mother said
The answer's obvious.
So that lady's my real mother...
.....
The problem lies with the birth certificate which states that I'm their biological son...
What happened exactly in my past?

Just what did that woman do to me...
NAOKI,
DIDN'T I ASK YOU TO STAY HOME? HOW COULD YOU RUN OFF LIKE THAT
MAKE SURE YOU STAY AT HOME WHEN I PUT IN CHARGE OF THE HOUSE NEXT TIME
And acting as though she's really my mother
How dare she lecture me like that. She's been lying to me!

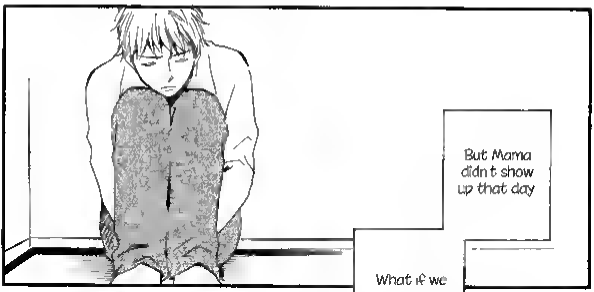
OH, STOP NAGGING
WHY DON'T YOU STAY HOME YOURSELF NEXT TIME!
NAOKI.
MUM HAD TO GO OUT, THAT'S WHY...
"Mum"
clench
clench
I can't forgive her for calling herself my mother.
She's not my mother. She was the one who snatched me from Mama. Mama was holding my hand so tightly then...
She cried and cried till she was hoarse...

BULLSHIT!
DON'T GIVE ME THAT "MUM" CRAP!
BANG
Kyaa
Ah
Nonie?
Are you okay?!

I want to see her so badly, just to see her

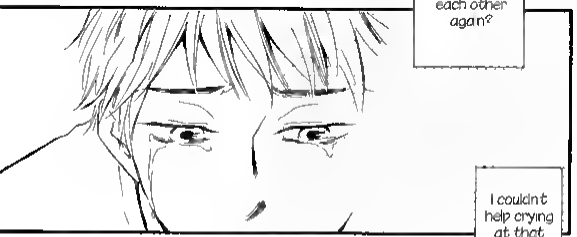
Holding my breath, waiting for the mother who said she'd come again

I skipped dinner and locked myself in the room.



But Mama didn't show up that day

What if we never see each other again?

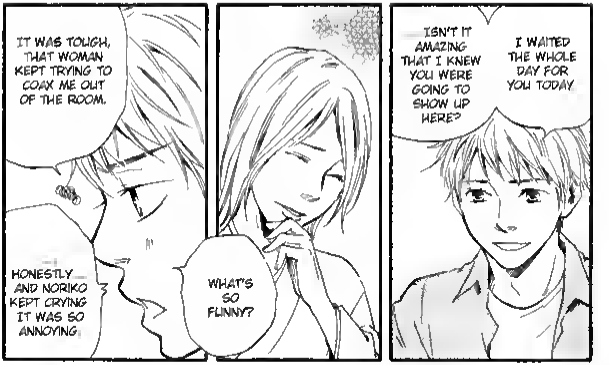


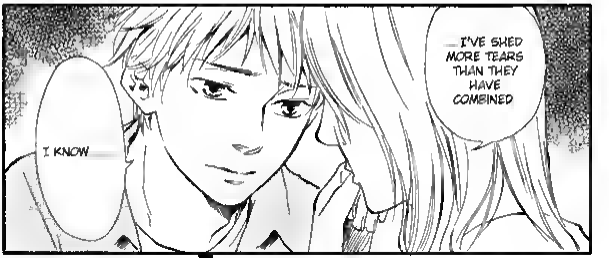
I couldn't help crying at that thought

I don't think I'm being a baby

I just miss her so badly

But the following night Mama finally showed up
YOU'RE HERE AT LAST—
I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
I'M BIG ENOUGH TO CARRY MAMA NOW
COME IN?
I'LL CARRY YOU IN
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
JUST LOOKING AT YOU
I DON'T WANT TO FORGET YOUR FACE I WANT TO REMEMBER EVERY DETAIL


IT WAS TOUGH, THAT WOMAN KEPT TRYING TO COAX ME OUT OF THE ROOM.
HONESTLY... AND NORIKO KEPT CRYING IT WAS SO ANNOYING.
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
ISN'T IT AMAZING THAT I KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO SHOW UP HERE?
I WAITED THE WHOLE DAY FOR YOU TODAY



Bliss
BrightNess.livejournal.com

BAM
BAM
Hehe
THEN WE WON'T LET HER IN
SHE'S SO NOISY
BAM
DON'T WORRY. I WON'T LET YOU HEAR HER VOICE
BETTER NOW?
He he
YOU'RE RIGHT, I REALLY DON'T HEAR HER...
SHOULD WE LET HER IN?
NO WAY

第11話

The next day
When I woke up, Mama was gone.
I don't care anymore
I've got nothing to do w/ th the Sugatas.

YOU'RE UP?
ARE YOU HUNGRY?
MUM WENT TO PICK DAD UP.
THE PRIEST IS COMING AT NOON
PRIEST?
TODAY'S THE SEVENTH
HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT FIRST, I'LL COOK FOR YOU.

WHO CARES
BROTHER, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOU MADE MUM CRY.

YESTER-DAY...
WHY DID YOU LOCK YOURSELF IN THE ROOM?

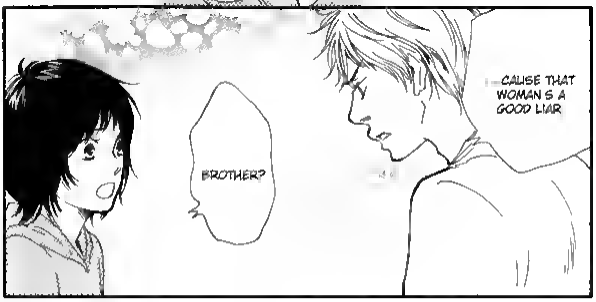
WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
Clink
Clink

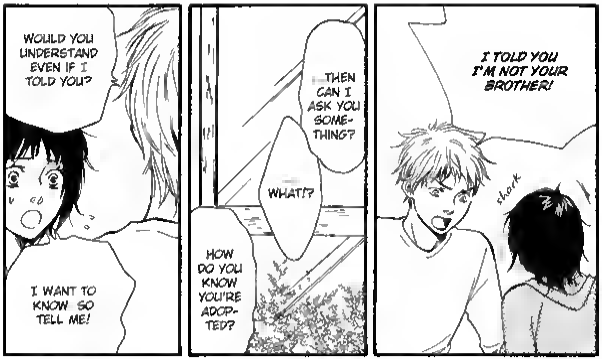
WHY DO YOU...
SOUND LIKE TAKASHI?

THAT WOMAN...

BROTHER...
But I've got no business with anyone from the Sugata family
Takashi?
Right I'd forgotten that guy
bang
DON'T CALL ME "BROTHER"!

I'M NOT YOUR BROTHER!
WHAT...
WHY ARE YOU SUDDENLY SAYING SUCH THINGS?
IT'S TRUE.
BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW I WAS ADOPTED BY THIS FAMILY. DID YOU?


BROTHER?
...CAUSE THAT WOMAN'S A GOOD LIAR


WOULD YOU UNDERSTAND EVEN IF I TOLD YOU?
I WANT TO KNOW SO TELL ME!
...THEN CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
WHAT!?
HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'RE ADOPTED?
I TOLD YOU I'M NOT YOUR BROTHER!
shark

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED GRANDMA AND GRANDPA'S BLOOD TYPES?
!?
HOW CAN IT BE...?
BECAUSE MY BLOOD TYPE IS 'O'
THAT'S WHAT IT SHOULD BE!

I never forgot what that woman said.
The cruel words she had for my weeping mother
Even if half his blood is worthless, the other half is still the Sugata family's blood
They stole me from my mother
It's not that simple
THAT MEANS YOU WERE ADOPTED?

WAIT!
THAT'S ABSOLUTELY NONSENSE!
In other words, she called Mama cheap and worthless.
I'M THE CONCUBINE'S SON
IT'S NOT!
IT'S ALL TRUE!

SO WHAT'S YOUR REAL MOTHER'S BLOOD TYPE!?
This brat still thinks her father's some gentleman?
GET A GRIP WILL YOU!?
HOW CAN THIS BE TRUE!?
Mama's blood type?
Why is she asking about this?
So Mama is..
I'm an O Dad's an AA

No matter what Mama's blood type is, the child can't possibly be an O blood type
If Dad's an AA...

That woman's not my real mother either
All of my memories were false from the beginning
ARE YOU FINALLY AWAKE?

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? SUDDENLY SAYING SUCH RIDICULOUS THINGS!
IS THAT WHY YOU SULKED ALL OF YESTERDAY? STOP BEING SO CHILDISH!
I can't answer back, cause she's right..
What on earth is going on?
Why didn't Mum come in? Why couldn't I hear her voice after that?
Who was that woman? How'd she know where my room was?

BROTHER, YOUR HAND?
THIS...
SINCE I WAS A CHILD...
..I never had this scar in the past.

Before I met that woman, I never had such a scar
What on earth
...But
The mother I was taken from when I was three...
Wait!
Brother!?
I really did have a flash-back of that person being my mother...
I seem to have fallen into some trap...

In the end, I skipped the seventh day prayers on the pretext that I was unwell.
NAOKI,
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU
CAN YOU COME HERE?
WHAT DID YOU SAY TO NORIKO?

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU SAID THOSE THINGS
TO A MOTHER, NOTHING COULD BE MORE HURTFUL
UNDER-STAND?
YOU'RE MY FLESH AND BLOOD
SO NOISY
girls
YOU'VE BEEN BEHAVING SO STRANGELY THESE LAST TWO DAYS
NAOKI CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT'S WRONG?
BUT I KNOW ONE THING FOR SURE... YOU'RE MY SON
THERE MUST BE SOME MISUNDER-STANDING
clench
whistle
whistle
whistle
whistle
whistle

The only reason?

What my weary, weeping mother suffered, this woman dares to dismiss with as few words as "the only reason"?

NAOKI!?
shock
!

Stop it
Not another word.
clench
Why?
clench
clench
Was I really going to... pour boiling water over her?
What was I trying to do?
Stop provoking me.
I'll throw this kettle at you.
SHUT UP!
...You shut your mouth.
...Damn you.
I'll pour this boiling water over you.
...NAOKI?

I want to... you.
I WANT TO KILL YOU
...No, I mustn't
NAOKI

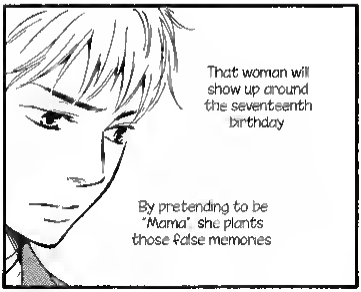
I'll kill this woman standing here
There's no reason to, but I just hate her.
I can't possibly hate her,
A trap...
and yet my heart is burning with hatred
...This is bad
I'm being possessed
I'm going to be like uncle Munekazu who was consumed by so much hatred
GUSH
that I'll kill my own mother...
UGH!

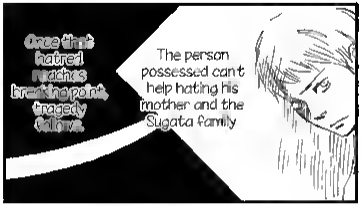
Psshhhh
Naoki!
AH!
NAAAAAA!!!
GUSH GUSH

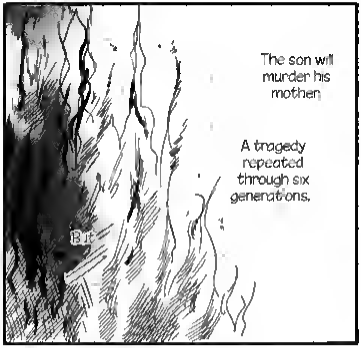
Even though my left hand was so badly scalded,
I felt...
Though my wrist was a bloody mess, and the pain was so bad I felt like vomiting...
I found that like the strips of dead skin which peeled off, those mysterious feelings of anxiety also faded away
Once home, ignoring my family's questioning looks, I locked myself in my room

Just what had possessed me?
I don't know her at all. I never had that scar on my left hand, and certainly don't remember being taken from my mother's side
I don't remember her face or voice, only her presence
The woman, who appeared before me
That woman wasn't human of course.
..Why was I so easily taken in? That's what I can't understand.
rustle
She planted some false memories in my mind to make me hate the Sugata family
IT WAS IN THIS COAT POCKET...

This thing doesn't matter at all
The 'O' type result must be another trap
Blood donation guide
clench
A trap set by that woman...
The most important thing now is to save Takashi.
I can understand Takashi's behavior now.
She's still got Takashi firmly under her control.




Once that hatred reaches the point, tragedy follows.
The person possessed can't help hating his mother and the Sugata family



The murderous look in Takashi's eyes when he looked at Aunty. The loathing and disdain in his words and actions.

I too found Mum hateful, and I also locked myself in the room to wait for that woman.

Though I'd already known it was the Sugata family curse, I was so easily led by the nose. If that's the case, then Takashi must have been struggling with this for a long time.

This wasn't the case with Aunt Mikiko.
Takashi didn't murder Aunty
I'm sure of this.
Because I was also manipulated by that curse
Once controlled by that woman, all rational sense is gone.
It's impossible to consider the consequences of matricide, because one no longer has the ability to think rationally.
I'm sure of it.
Takashi didn't do it
In those circumstances he couldn't have planned it such that it'd look like suicide.
Bliss
The Last Moment

Takashi didn't do it.
However, he's still possessed by that woman
Upon seeing Aunty's unconscious state,
Takashi's shock was genuine. I'm sure of that.
IT'S THIS

This red scar on the wrist.
These finger marks, as though from a death grip
..That woman's death grip.
Moreover
Uncle Munekazu had the same scar on his hand.
Takash bears this scar which brings death.
It's the mark of the curse

I must free Takashi from this curse
SEEMS LIKE THE PAINKILLERS ARE WEARING OFF
Can I...
Really do it?
And this is the only way I know how
But...
IT REALLY HURTS
Uhhh
Uhhh

The Sugata family's eldest sons will commit matricide when they turn seventeen.

But, there's no mother for Takashi to murder now.

It's possible that Takashi can lead a peaceful life from now on.

If that's really so...

第12話

Then what I'm about to do is nothing more than an unprovoked attack.

Click
Ah
whistle
What should I do? Will this really save Takashi?
I really hope
Someone will wake up!
PLEASE ANYBODY
PLEASE TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD DO

As long as he wakes up I'll run away
I'll never try this again
I know what I'm doing is wrong
I hope someone will wake up and stop me...
I hope Takashi wakes up too

His face is so thin... Not that it's surprising.
He's been cooped up in his room and hasn't been eating properly.
shake
shake
shake
shake
shake
This is the last year of his life
Takashi's already seventeen.
And then they'll die
The Sugata family's eldest sons will commit matricide when they turn seventeen.
I don't know if this is the right thing to do
flinch
But—

!?
For a perfectly healthy person to die at seventeen is definitely wrong!
grab
ぐぐぐぐぐぐぐ

AHHHHH!
AHH!

WHAT'S GOING ON! WHY DID YOU...?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO!?
Naoki!
SMACK
BECAUSE I HAD TO

LIKE?
LIKE UNCLE MUNEKAZU?
NAOKI'S BEEN VERY STRANGE LATELY. JUST LIKE—
It's the only way to escape from that woman.
I THINK WE ARE
ARE WE VERY SIMILAR?
...
The uncle who never regained his old self after he was possessed by that woman
The uncle who killed himself after murdering his parents when he was seventeen

I really don't know any other solution. If Takashi can't escape the curse, he'll definitely die at seventeen.
I can't stand by and do nothing!

...I COULDN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER WAY

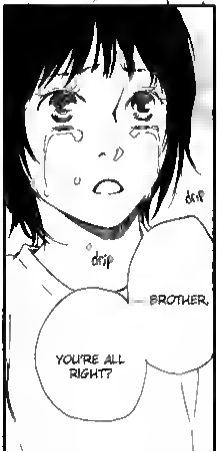
NACK! DO YOU WANT TO KILL ME?

So...
Dad knows
too.
NO,
I'M
ALL RIGHT
NOW
SLIDE

SORRY TO HAVE MADE YOU WORRY...

ruffle
ruffle
!

YEAH, I'M FINE NOW...


drip
drip
BROTHER,
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?

I SAID I WAS SORRY
wipe
WHAT A TROUBLESOME BROTHER
YOU'D BETTER REFLECT ON YOUR ACTIONS
OKAY I WILL
—HOW'S TAKASHI?

Actually...
I don't know if what I did can help Takashi escape the curse.
step
step
TAKASHI S ALL RIGHT NOW
LOOK

...NAOKI?
He sounds calm and gentle...
DOES IT HURT?

!

LISTEN,
YOU'RE AUNTY'S SON!
TAKASHI

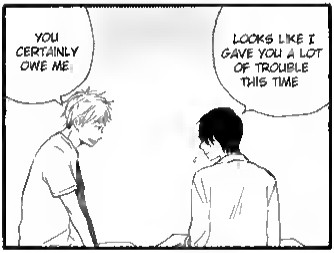
CLENCH
NOD
YOU WEREN'T TAKEN AWAY BY ANYONE THOSE MEMORIES WERE FALSE

YES...
drip
MY MOM'S DEAD—

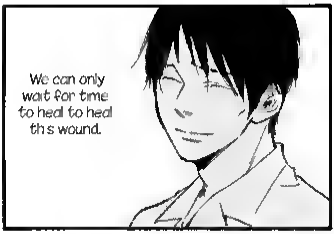
Uuu
Uuh
Uu
Uuu
Uu
Now that he's free of the curse at last...
The first thing he has to come to terms with is his mother's death.
NAOKI... I'M SORRY...

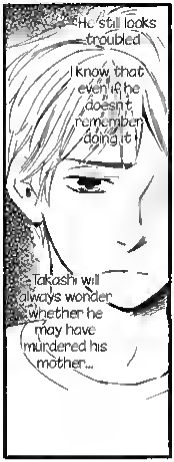
DON'T TAKE IT TOO BADLY. YOU WEREN'T THE ONLY ONE...
AND NORIKO...
I REALLY TREATED YOU GUYS BADLY...
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY FIRST-BORN SON
?
I started to tell Takashi about the events of this short summer...
Events which had a long history...
The curse which had attacked the Sugata family for six generations.
Uncle Munekazu,
me...
and Takashi...

I dared to ask the question, because I knew the answer
—I DON'T RECALL DOING SUCH A THING
BUT
—DID YOU REALLY MURDER AUNTY?
ONLY YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT
DID I MURDER HER?
MOM...
THEN YOU DIDN'T MURDER AUNTY
I STILL REMEMBER EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED WHEN THAT WOMAN WAS CONTROLLING ME
MY MEMORIES ARE INTACT.
THE ONLY THING I CAN'T REMEMBER IS THAT WOMAN'S FACE.



I can't help him there.




He still looks troubled
I know that even if he doesn't remember doing it
Takashi will always wonder whether he may have murdered his mother...

because Aunty left no last words.

THIRD? WHAT'S WRONG?
Meowww
Meow
Meowwwww
Pink
!?
It's her

Mum!
KYAAA!
AHHH
GRAB
!!
STAB
STAB
...it's not real!

smirk
So Takashi sees himself and Aunty
I DIDN'T DO IT!
I DID NOT KILL MY MOTHER!
IT'S NOT TRUE!
Bang
Bang
Bang
Spray

What he sees is himself killing his mother himself going mad...
GRAB
Ah!
ow...!

no!

!
Giggle
Giggle

MREOWWW
Hehehe...
CONSTRICT
Hehe
Hehehe
It's her...

BAM
land
THIRD!
SHE'S GONE
MEOW
EVEN THE BLOOD'S GONE

TAKASHI
YEAH...
I don't know how to put it
but..
We both know, that woman hasn't given up yet.

第13話

GOOD MORNING

"Im sorry to have made everyone worry"
After hearing Takashi's apology, Mum and Dad let out relieved smiles,
and Noriko burst into tears.

After that, we changed our clothes, took our medicine and were instructed by Mum and Dad to rest properly
I CAN SEE WHY I WAS TARGETED.
BUT WHY WOULD SHE GO AFTER YOU AS WELL, NAOKI?
第13話

COULD IT BE BECAUSE THE CURSE WASN'T COMPLETE, IN YOUR CASE?
I DON'T KNOW

With only two daughters left... Naturally, the eldest girl continued the Sugata line.
That being the case... Takashi's the only the Sugata family's eldest son

BECAUSE THE SUGATA CURSE FOLLOWS A PATTERN
THE ELDEST SON WILL MURDER HIS MOTHER, THEN DIE AT SEVENTEEN... BUT YOU DIDN'T KILL AUNTY
!?

nod
BECAUSE SHE HAD ALREADY...

CAN A CURSE BE THAT ADAPTABLE?
SO, THAT'S WHY SHE LOOKED FOR ANOTHER SUGATA SON TO COMPLETE THE CURSE
SHE'S PROBABLY GOT HER OWN IDEAS
BESIDES, THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME SHE CHANGED TARGETS

THERE'S BEEN A CASE OF A YOUNGER SON DYING
I SEE...
DO YOU THINK THAT WOMAN'S GIVEN UP?

IT FEELS REALLY STRANGE
...WHO KNOWS, I MAY DIE TOMORROW.
...I DOUBT IT.
DON'T SAY THAT.
YOU CAN'T AVOID THIS EITHER.
'CAUSE YOU'RE SEVENTEEN TOO
WHAT'S WRONG?
...DON'T YOU FIND IT STRANGE?

WHY...
DID THIS HAPPEN TO ME FIRST...?
BECAUSE AUNTY'S THE ELDEST DAUGHTER
TAKASHI, WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
...I JUST HAD AN APPALLING THOUGHT
...IS THAT THE ONLY REASON?

RESULT
WELL, IT MUST BE THAT WOMAN'S TRAP.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR BLOOD TEST RESULT?
AND THERE'S ANOTHER UNSOLVED MYSTERY
APPALLING?
UNCLE'S TYPE 'AA',
AUNTY'S TYPE 'O'
NAOKI IS A TYPE 'O'
WHAT ARE YOU DRIVING AT?
BUT,
WHAT IF IT IS?
DOESN'T MEAN IT'S TRUE, RIGHT?

HEY!
IF IT'S TRUE, THAT MEANS I'M NOT MY FATHER'S SON!
HEY WHAT IS IT NOW?
MY PARENTS ARE BOTH TYPE 'A'.
AND SO?
AND SO AM I.

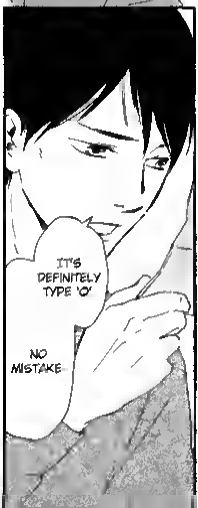
THAT WOMAN APPEARED BEFORE ME IN MARCH.
WENT FOR YOU... IN APRIL.

SO...
SHE...
GOT US MIXED UP?

EVEN THE BLOOD DONATION CENTER IS UNDER HER CONTROL?
DO YOU THINK SHE'S THAT POWERFUL?
IF SHE'D MADE YOU SEE THE WRONG THING, I CAN STILL BELIEVE THAT...

I REMEMBER THROWING IT HERE...
rustle
rustle
rustle

IF IT'S TRUE,
DOES IT MEAN...


IT'S DEFINITELY TYPE 'O'
NO MISTAKE

hand

The umbilical cord Aunty left behind.
I THINK— I'LL ASK HIM TO HELP TEST THIS
MY NEIGHBOR'S A MEDICAL STUDENT
I THINK IT'S TRUE.
Upon seeing our grave expressions he promised to let us know the results as soon as he could.
We got a call that same afternoon...
Takashi phoned his neighbor who was about to leave for classes.
We dashed over, gave him the small box and asked him to test its contents.

...IT'S TYPE 'O'
That means Im..
Not the child of the Satous family
The umbilical cord proves that it's not Takashi... It's me.
What a simple conclusion—I'm Aunt/MIKO's child

HOW...
HOW COULD SUCH A THING HAPPEN?
Two people who resemble each other so much must have some kinds of ties.
And Takashi?
He takes after Aunty
WE WERE EXCHANGED AT BIRTH

ACTUALLY
I THOUGHT SOMETHING WAS STRANGE BEFORE THIS
HAVE YOU NOTICED MY IRISES ARE GREEN?
!?
HEY, YEAH.
SO ARE YOUR DAD'S
HAVE YOU NOTICED?

I READ THAT WHEN A CHILD AND ITS FATHER HAVE GREEN IRISES, THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THEY'RE BIOLOGICALLY RELATED IS MORE THAN 80%.
THE IRIS COLOR IS HEREDITARY
MOST PEOPLE HAVE BROWN IRISES, AND I'VE SEEN PHOTOS OF MY DAD. HIS ARE BROWN TOO.
NO, NEVER...
I NEVER NOTICED
—I SEE
BUT WHY... WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?
MY DAD... WAS FREQUENTLY IN SOUTH AMERICA ON BUSINESS AFTER I WAS BORN
SO WHEN I HEARD YOU MENTION THE BLOOD TEST I THOUGHT OF THIS FACT
THAT POSSIBILITY'S BOTHERED ME A BIT EVER SINCE
ALTHOUGH 80% ISN'T REALLY ALL THAT HIGH A FIGURE... BUT...

HE GOT INTO AN ACCIDENT THERE, SO MUM HAD TO GO OVER AND LOOK AFTER HIM
I WAS ONLY TWO MONTHS OLD THEN AND I HEARD THAT'S WHEN MUM LEFT ME IN AUNTY'S CARE
SO THAT'S WHEN...
NO WONDER
SO THAT'S WHY THAT WOMAN HAD US BOTH DANCING TO HER TUNE. BUT WHICH OF US IS REALLY THE SUGATA FAMILY'S FIRST-BORN SON?
YOU SHOULD BE THE ONE CARRYING ON THE LINE?
WHICH OF US IS THE ELDEST SON?
AUNTY'S THE ELDEST DAUGHTER AND THE ELDEST SON WOULD HAVE MURDERED HER...
YET, I'M THE ONE WHO HAS BLOOD TIES WITH HER

IN THE END, SHE WENT WITH THE LATTER
WHETHER TO GO AFTER THE BIOLOGICAL SON, OR THE ONE WHO HAD BEEN WITH THEM FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS...
ON THE OTHER HAND, SHE RAISED YOU FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS,
SO THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE
I THINK THAT WOMAN WAS JUST AS CONFUSED
THEN, WHY WERE YOU...?
I DON'T KNOW...

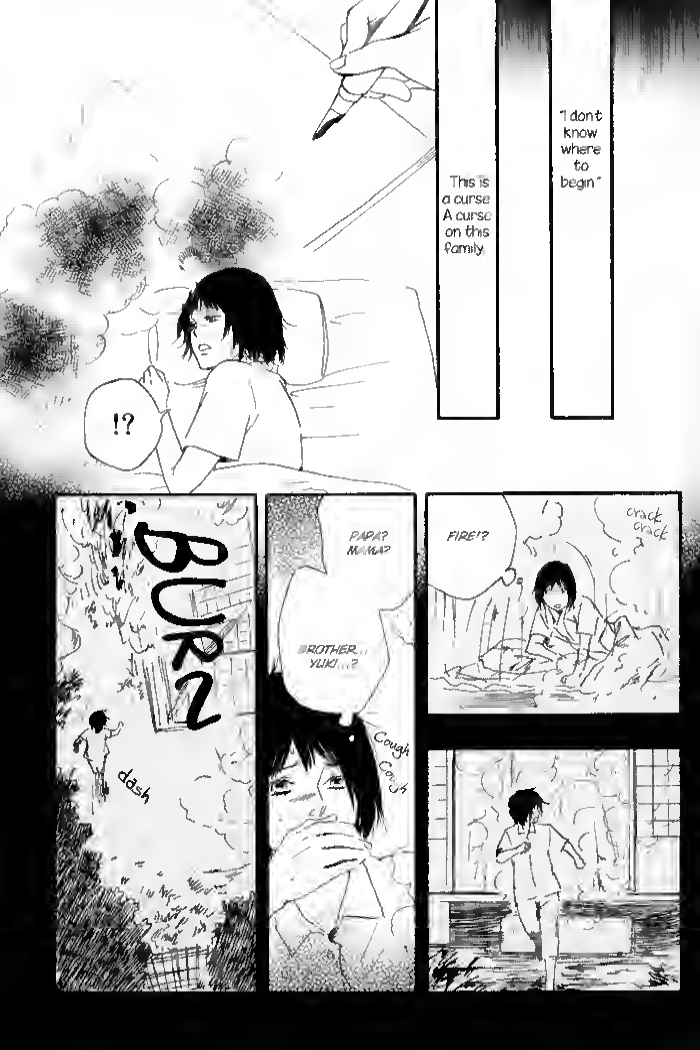
COULD IT BE BECAUSE MY MUM WAS NEXT IN THE SUGATA LINE AFTER AUNTY'S DEATH?
TECHNICALLY, SHE SHOULD HAVE WAITED FOR THE NEXT GENERATION. IN OTHER WORDS MY FUTURE CHILDREN WOULD HAVE BEEN THE NEXT TARGET.
BUT...
YOUR CHILDREN WOULDN'T BE CONSIDERED THE FIRST-BORN SONS OF THE SUGATA FAMILY.
YOU HAVE A POINT.
MAYBE SHE JUST WANTED TO ERADICATE THE SUGATA FAMILY AND SETTLE OLD SCORES ONCE AND FOR ALL...

Ha ha.
WHY AUNTY WAS SO SET AGAINST THE IDEA OF YOU AND NORIKO GETTING MARRIED...
NOW I SEE.
I doubt it, was the former.
No matter what, Aunty's responsible for things as they stand.
Was it an innocent mistake or deliberate?
EVERY TIME THAT WAS MENTIONED, AUNTY WOULD LOOK WORRIED AND PERPLEXED.
Looking back, it seems so obvious.
You're related by blood.
Aunty knew this.
Because she planned everything.
But why did she do it...
I think I have a vague idea

step
step
step
She
BROTHER
...THIS!
WE JUST GOT THIS...
親展
A LETTER ADDRESSED TO YOU
First she switched the babies, then when the child turned seventeen she chose to end things by her own hand...
I can understand why Aunty did what she did

A letter from Aunty...
From the dead.
Sugata Mieko
A LETTER FROM AUNTY...
rustle
Noriko wanted to stay, but I got rid of her by pointing out that the letter was marked "private"...

"Naoki"
"If you're reading this letter it means I'm no longer alive. Please don't be too alarmed at receiving such a letter."
"I'll leave this letter in a locker. Perhaps whoever finds the letter will help me to post it..."
"Of course, I don't know whether anyone will really do such a thing."
If this letter never reaches you, perhaps that too is fate.


"I don't know where to begin"
This is a curse A curse on this family
!?
BURN
dash
PAPA? MAMA?
BROTHER..! YUKI...?
Cough Cough
FIRE!?
crack crack

I was holding a box of papers, but I don't remember how I got hold of it

I lost this particular memory

The next thing I remember was standing next to Yuki in a circle of spectators, watching our house razed to the ground.

I knew what they meant. I believe Yuki knew too.

"It's happening again," the villagers whispered among themselves.

Later, their three bodies were brought out of the charred house. The following day, we were told that Brother had committed suicide after murdering our parents.

Half the main house was gone by the time the fire was put out. Only then did the villagers realize that there was no sign of my parents or brother, and started to check as a result.

Surely nothing bad would happen? Because I was no longer Sugata Mikiko

I felt unsettled during my marriage and even more so when I was pregnant

...But I never forgot about "it"

After that, Mama's relatives took us in, so we left the village to study elsewhere Then I went to work in the city, where I met Yoshitaka-san

Was there a way to escape the curse?
I lived in constant fear.
Always racking my brains.
...That's when I got the idea.
Even my husband couldn't tell them apart.
Until one day when Yuki left her baby in my care.
This boy cousin who was younger by two months.
These two babies, who looked so much alike, almost like identical twins.
Neither had any moles or distinguishing birthmarks.

YUKI...

I'M SORRY

That could save us. That was the only idea I could think of then.

With trembling hands I exchanged their clothes, and then asked my husband, who had just walked past, to guess which one was Takashi. He looked at both babies and without hesitation pointed to Yuki's baby.

Finally Yuki returned three months [illegible]

By then, both babies had their own distinctive looks and temperament, and even my husband could tell them apart. Nobody saw through the fraud I'd committed single-handedly...

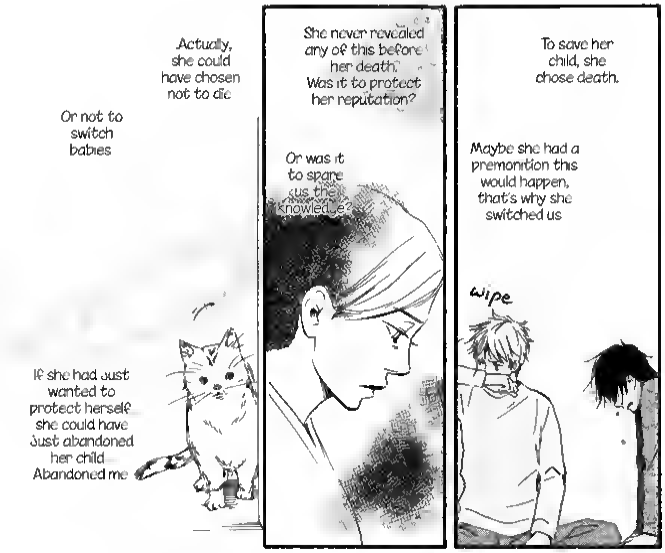
In the [illegible] daughter [illegible] her [illegible] sister's first-born son, and she in turn raised the eldest daughter's first-born son, then perhaps that might help us to avert disaster

I've already resolved to do it. Even so, I'm still frightened.
Can Takashi really escape the curse? Surely he won't do anything to Yuki...
Surely he won't kill his own mother?
"Before Takashi's hands are stained with blood, I'm choosing to end this myself."
Maybe Heaven is punishing me
The curse we were supposed to have escaped manifested again, this time in my sister's child, Takashi
But the one murdered wouldn't be her. It would be me

"Because with my death, Yuki will be the last remaining member of the Sugata family."
"Even if I die, there's no guarantee the curse can be broken."
"Naoki, please be strong."
Please save Takashi. Please, please help him."
The letter doesn't say anything more about us being switched.

Other than that, she talked about what happened to Uncle Munekazu and things that have happened so far
She just wanted me to be careful, and to look after Takashi
Takashi has the right to know what's in the letter
HERE
rustle

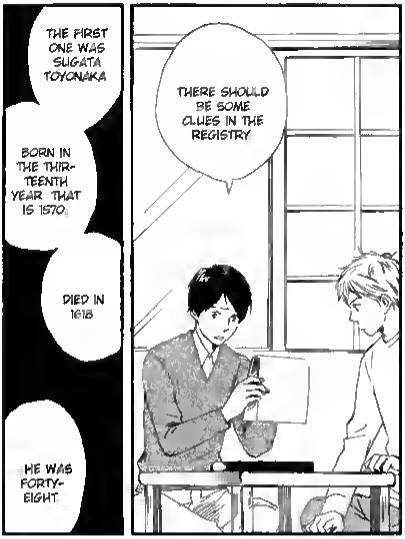
So I was right... It was for Takashi's sake that Aunty chose such a tragic death

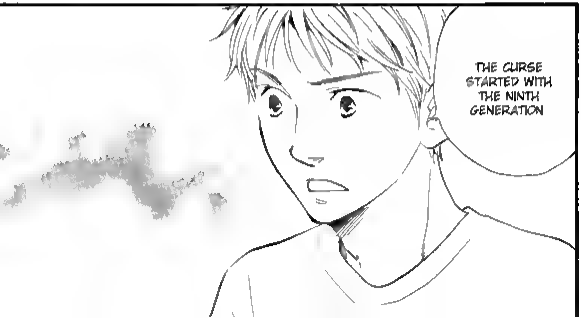

To save her child, she chose death.
Maybe she had a premonition this would happen, that's why she switched us
wipe
She never revealed any of this before her death. Was it to protect her reputation?
Or was it to spare us the knowledge?
Actually, she could have chosen not to die
Or not to switch babies
If she had just wanted to protect herself, she could have just abandoned her child. Abandoned me

I HAVE TO KNOW...
I HAVE TO KNOW WHY THAT WOMAN CURSED THE SUGATA FAMILY
I CAN'T JUST FORGET ABOUT THIS AND NEVER KNOW WHY

I HAVE A DUTY TO LIVE ON
I HAVE A DUTY TO FACE THE FUTURE BRAVELY
IT'S SOMETHING MY MOTHER GAVE HER LIFE FOR, AND IT'S A DUTY THAT'S BEEN LAID ON MY SHOULDERS
nod
YOU'RE RIGHT

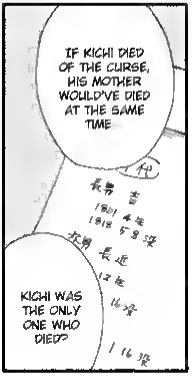
第14話


THE FIRST ONE WAS SUGATA TOYONAKA
BORN IN THE THIRTEENTH YEAR THAT IS 1570.
DIED IN 1618
HE WAS FORTY-EIGHT.
THERE SHOULD BE SOME CLUES IN THE REGISTRY

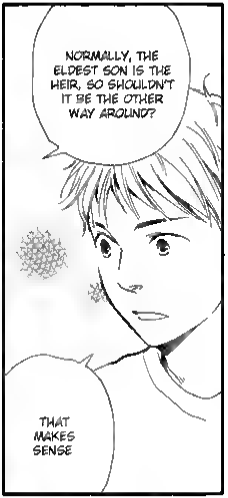

THE CURSE STARTED WITH THE NINTH GENERATION

I GET IT.
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT
IF HE WAS BORN IN 1570 — THAT WAS THE YEAR OF THE MOMENTOUS BATTLE OF UNIFICATION. TOYONAKA WAS THE FIRST GENERATION, SO HE WOULD HAVE BECOME A SAMURAI THEN
I KNOW. BUT WE'RE LOOKING FOR CLUES
PRO-BABLY A SAMU-RAI
HE HAD A SURNAME AND THE NAME SUGATA.
ALL RIGHT
THE PARENTS ALSO DIED AT THIS TIME
FOLLOWED BY NAGACHIKA WHO WAS THREE YEARS YOUNGER HE DIED AT SEV-ENTEEN TOO
AND THE FIRST DEATH AT SEVENTEEN OCCURRED IN THE NINTH GENERATION. KICHI, SON OF NORICHIKA
—HOW STRANGE.

MAYBE SHE WAS THE STEPMOTHER?
YOU COULD BE RIGHT
BUT THEIR NAMES ARE STRANGE TOO THE FIRST SON WAS NAMED KICHI, AND THE SECOND NAGACHIKA,
"NAGACHIKA" SOUNDS LIKE A SAMURAI'S NAME BUT THE ELDEST SON WAS NAMED KICHI?


IF KICHI DIED OF THE CURSE, HIS MOTHER WOULD'VE DIED AT THE SAME TIME
KICHI WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO DIED?

AH
IT WAS RAINING THAT DAY THERE WAS A WOMAN STANDING UNDER A TREE

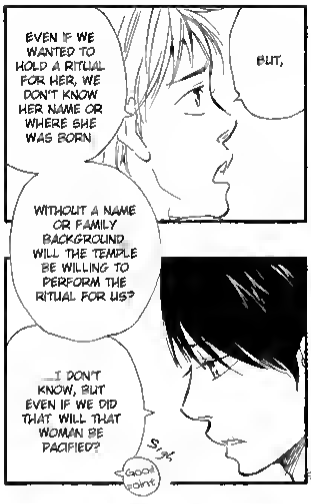

NORMALLY, THE ELDEST SON IS THE HEIR, SO SHOULDN'T IT BE THE OTHER WAY AROUND?
THAT MAKES SENSE

NAOKI, YOU SAW IT?
YEAH
I THINK THAT CHILD WAS KICHI AND THE ONE CRYING IN THE RAIN WAS THAT WOMAN
AND UNDER THE TREE THAT FIERCE-LOOKING WOMAN
SHE WAS NAGACHIKA'S MOTHER
YOU SAW IT TOO ?
THAT SCENE?

THERE WAS NO HEIR, SO SHE INSISTED ON TAKING AWAY THE MISTRESS'S CHILD
BUT A FEW YEARS LATER, SHE HERSELF GAVE BIRTH TO THE SECOND SON
IT'S NOT HARD TO IMAGINE WHAT HAPPENED, AND KICHA NEVER CHANGED HIS NAME
HE WAS ALREADY SEVENTEEN THEN?
THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN AFTER GENPUKU*? NORMALLY, ONE HAD A DIFFERENT NAME AFTER GENPUKU

*Genpuku – In ancient Japan, the time a boy came of age

HE DIDN'T CHANGE HIS NAME
BECAUSE HE WAS THE MISTRESS'S SON
AFTER HE WAS BROUGHT BACK AS A FOSTER SON, THE FIRST WIFE THEN GAVE BIRTH TO NAGACHIKA...
WHO THEN DIED AT SEVENTEEN, TOGETHER WITH HIS PARENTS
I THINK THE CURSE STARTED WITH THIS SECOND SON
NOW THE PROBLEM IS...
HOW DO WE BREAK THIS CURSE
THAT...


EVEN IF WE WANTED TO HOLD A RITUAL FOR HER, WE DON'T KNOW HER NAME OR WHERE SHE WAS BORN.
BUT,
WITHOUT A NAME OR FAMILY BACKGROUND WILL THE TEMPLE BE WILLING TO PERFORM THE RITUAL FOR US?
...I DON'T KNOW, BUT EVEN IF WE DID THAT, WILL THAT WOMAN BE PACIFIED?
SIGH
GOOD POINT

USUALLY, TO MOLLIFY AN ANGRY SPIRIT WE BUILD A GRAVESTONE FOR IT OR HOLD PRAYERS.
...YEAH.

IS THERE A WAY TO GIVE KICHI BACK TO THAT WOMAN...?
A GIA

GIVE KICHI...

PLACING KICHI'S ASHES INTO HER GRAVE IS PROBABLY THE FASTEST WAY,
BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THAT WOMAN'S BURIED
GOOD IDEA... BUT HOW DO WE DO THAT?
GIVE HIM BACK? HOW?
THAT'S WHAT WE HAVE TO FIGURE OUT.
MAYBE GIVE HER BACK HIS ASHES OR SOMETHING.
OUR ANCESTORS' GRAVES ARE ALL THERE AND THOUGH I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT WE CAN DO, WE SHOULD AT LEAST DO SOMETHING
THE VILLAGE!
WHERE TO?
LET'S GO OUT
GET READY QUICKLY
Stand

WAIT...
THE SUGATA GRAVES ARE HERE
HUH?
THEY WERE REBURIED ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO

YEAH I HEARD THAT ALL THE URNS FROM THE OLD GRAVE WERE PLACED IN HERE
ONLY THIS ONE?
THIS IS IT
...OKAY.
LET'S START
reach
I'LL MOVE THEM OUT WHILE YOU CHECK THEM
rustle
READY ...?

IT'S NOT HERE
TADA-MASA
BUT I COULDN'T FIND TADAMASA'S URN, OR THE ASHES OF THOSE WHO DIED WITH HIM.
WHERE IS YOSHIMASA'S BROTHER
WHICH ONE IS THE OLDEST URN?
YOSHIMASA OF THE TENTH GENERATION
AFTER THAT EVERYONE ELSE'S IS INTACT
HOW CAN THAT BE ...?
THAT MEANS THE NUMBERS ARE WRONG

WHAT KIND OF CURSE IS THIS?
STONES!?
YEAH...
THIS IS THE LAST ONE?
I ONCE HELPED A NEIGHBOR WHO HAD HIS ANCESTORS REBURIED...
AFTER UNEARTHING THE OLD GRAVES... WE FOUND THAT THE BONES WERE GONE
BONES DECOMPOSE TOO... AND IN ACIDIC SOIL, DECOMPOSITION IS QUICKER
BUT... EVEN IF THE BONES ARE GONE THE GRAVES CAN'T BE NEGLECTED, RIGHT?
SO...
THEY THEN REPLACED THE ASHES WITH SOIL FROM THE GRAVE AND REBURIED THAT
...I THINK THESE STONES SERVE A SIMILAR PURPOSE

!
NAOKI, WE'VE FAILED
KICHI'S ASHES AREN'T HERE
BUT STONES TO REPLACE THE ASHES?
USING NOT SOIL
nod

!
WE'RE IN TROUBLE IF THAT WOMAN SHOWS UP HERE!
IT'S GOING TO BE EVENING SOON WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE FAST
NAOKI?
QUICKLY

MEOW
!?
PERK
rustle
rustle
rustle
— DO YOU THINK THAT'S HER?
WELL IF IT'S NOT OUR ANGRY ANCESTORS, THEN IT'S MOST LIKELY HER
YOU'RE STILL IN THE MOOD TO BE SARCASTIC?
WHAT ELSE TO BE.
RUSTLE

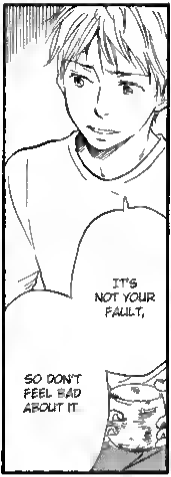
RUSTLE
THE DIRECTION THIRD'S LOOKING IN IS THE RIGHT ONE. DON'T PANIC OR BE CONFUSED.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
I KNOW.

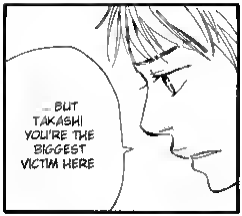
rustle
TAKASHI WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
rustle
AS LONG AS WE RUN INTO THE FOREST, WE CAN GO BACK THE WAY WE CAME
rustle
LET'S GO THEN
TURN
THIRD!
RUSTLE
THIRD!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

THIRD CAN'T POSSIBLY BE BEHIND US!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE FIRST!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
shock
!!
Shit I forgot about the um...
There's no time to put it back.
DAMN IT!
catch
RUN! THE ROAD'S JUST AHEAD, PAST THESE TREES
catch

Haa
Haa
haa
haa
haa
RUSTLE
rustle
rustle
!
THIRD
land
THANK GOOD-NESS

I'VE REALLY GIVEN AUNTY AND UNCLE A LOT OF TROUBLE THIS TIME. EVEN NORIKO'S SUFFERED...
Dad and Noriko will go home first tomorrow.
Mum plans to stay for a while more...


IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT,
SO DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT IT.


...BUT TAKASHI YOU'RE THE BIGGEST VICTIM HERE

ME?

rattle
IF ONLY WE KNEW WHICH PARTS IN HERE BELONGED TO KICHA...
THAT WOMAN WILL PROBABLY COME AGAIN
We have to get through tonight by ourselves
Though being together is comforting, but...
That feeling vanishes the moment that woman shows up
PERK
HISS
HISS
HISS

MEOWRR
RRR WRRR
MEOWRR
WRRR
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG

The rain shelter outside is definitely shut
Knocking at the window
KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK
Ha
BANG
BANG

BANG
BANG
...She's at the door
thump
thump
thump
splash
splash
splash
BANG
BANG
splash
MEOWRR

fwoosh
thump
thump
SCREECH
SNARL
BANG

!?
MEOWRR!
silence
JUST SHOW YOURSELF
drag
drag

STOP IT!
WE'RE NOT IN THE MOOD FOR YOUR CHEAP TRICKS!
fwoosh
!
BANG
Bliss

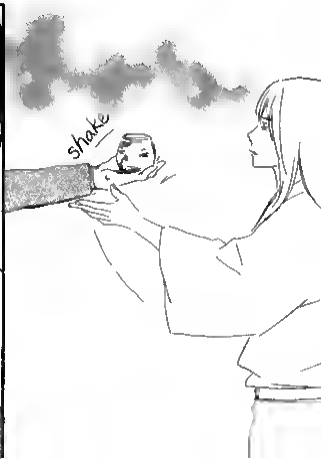
SLAM
TAKASHI ...!
!?
Pull
Pull
Pull
Pull
TAKASHI ...!

YOU'VE KILLED SO MANY OF THE SUGATA'S MEMBERS THESE PAST TWO HUNDRED YEARS, YET YOU'RE STILL NOT SATISFIED!?
DO YOU REALLY HATE US SO MUCH!?
Cough
Cough
THAT'S ENOUGH FROM YOU
DAMN IT

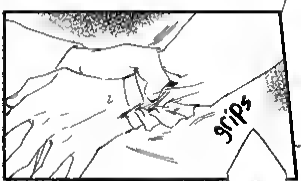
WHAT'S SO FUNNY!?
YOU SHOULD JUST LEAVE, KICHI'S WAITING FOR HIS MOTHER IN THE NEXT WORLD.
BANG!
THUMP
THUD
rattle
WHO'S THERE!?
rattle
BANG
KICHI'S YOUR SON ISN'T HE!?
GO AND LOOK FOR HIM!

KICHI'S HERE. HE'S RIGHT HERE IN THIS URN.

YOUR SON'S ALWAYS BEEN HERE WAITING TO RETURN TO YOUR SIDE.


shake

shock
!!
SLIP
KICHI'S RIGHT THERE, SO TAKE HIM WITH YOU AND LEAVE!
SMASH


grips

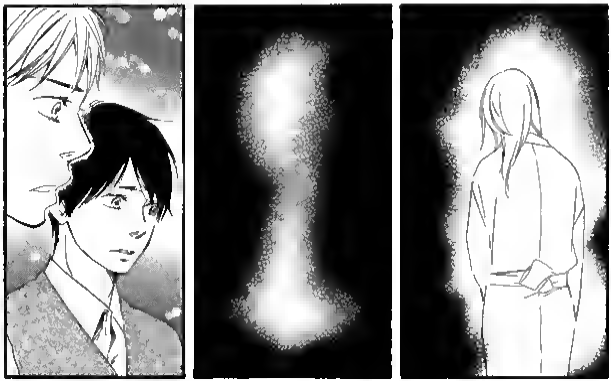
.. Forget it, let her do what she wants.

Urgh...
Ahh...
smile
wave
grab

She's really pitiful if we don't accompany her.
Since she's so imploring, and yearns to take us with her...
This is her pain.
Mine... and Mother's.
Pain and hatred bred so of the Sugata family.
This is...
grab
NAOKI!
NO WAKE UP!

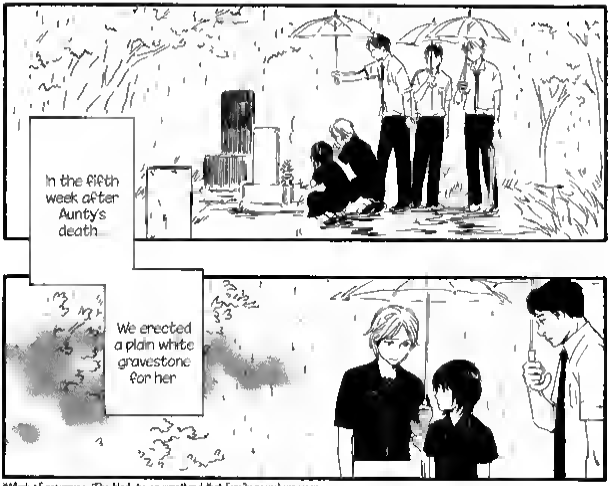
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO TAKE ME WITH YOU!
I STILL REMEMBER MY MOTHER!
slip
land

release
release
Ah
I thought everyone in the Sugata family was evil
...It's Aunty's letter

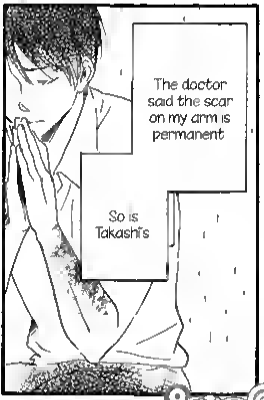


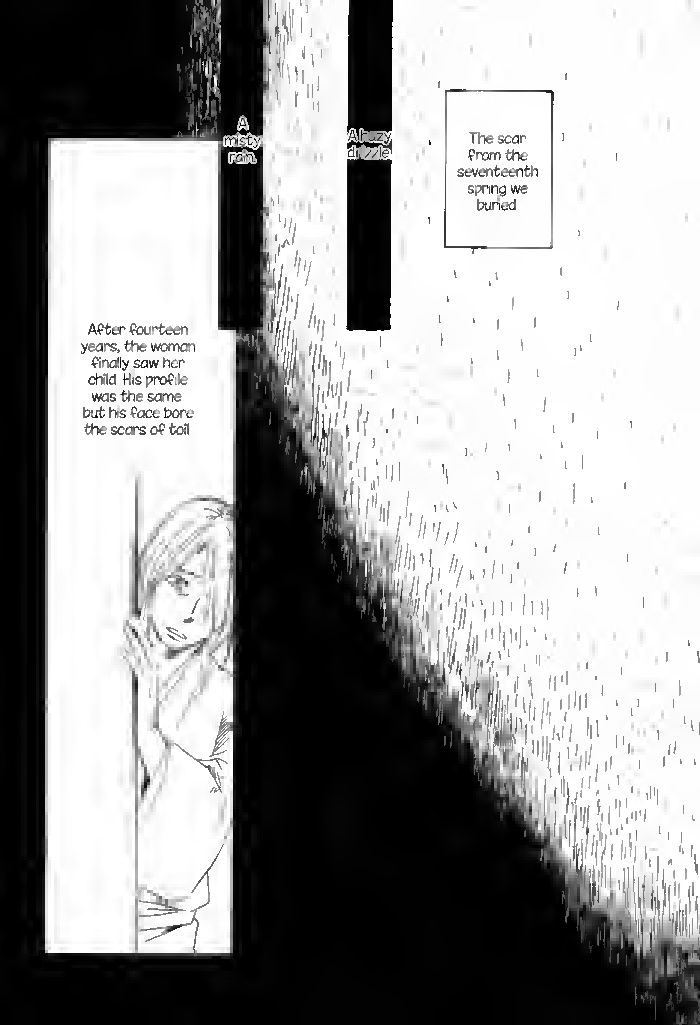
ARE YOU TWO ALL RIGHT!?
TAKASHI, WHAT HAPPENED?
BROTHER.
DASH

you protected Takashi



*Mark of mourning. The black tie or wristband that family members wear.




A misty rain
A hazy drizzle
The scar from the seventeenth spring we buried
After fourteen years, the woman finally saw her child. His profile was the same but his face bore the scars of toil

His hand still bore the faint finger marks.
This kindled a burning hatred for the Sugata family
Mother and son embraced each other tightly and then had a heart-to-heart about the lives they were now leading.
Only three words but he understood right away Miraculously he remembered the long-forgotten face of his mother
I'm your mother
He remembered the rain that day and his mother's tears The hand that had been loath to let him go and the pain of that desperate clasp
One look, and it was obvious he was not leading a happy life
The woman cried to see him so, then unable to bear it still told him everything.

The child attacked his foster parents but didn't succeed in killing them. His attempt to escape ended with his throat being slit.

The child remembered, but the Sugata family had long forgotten that woman's existence.
They only recalled her existence after the child's accusations.

The child had just turned seventeen a month earlier

「過ぎる十七の春」
第②巻
終

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過ぎる十七の春②

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